

Ruth Hultman
1059 Blackfield Ct
Santa Clara, CA 95051
RHultman@yahoo.com

I have 2 friends with serious speech difficulties, and find it takes effort and special attention to understand what they are sharing with me. They are not related to each other except by way of their shared disability.

I have also worked with children with special needs. One of our goals is to teach them skills to allow as independence as possible.

I find it is well worth my time and effort to understand their needs and thoughts. Of course when they have a need it is imperative that I understand! Having Speech-to-Speech available and safe will help them to maintain independence as they mature and to make it much easier for business and friends to understand them.

It is easier to understand when I watch the face of each of them when they speak. Telephone lines are not always clear, and background noise makes it more difficult. Having Speech-to-Speech assistance is very important for their safety. It allows them to maintain more frequent contact with friends and family.

Section III has suggestions that can provide greater safety and ease.

--People with a speech disability need and deserve easy access to Speech-To-Speech or a viable alternative.

--Operators should assure callers and the recipient of calls that everything said will be kept confidential.

--Operators need to stay with the caller long enough to get used to the way the PERSON with a speech disability speaks.

--More people with speech disabilities need to know about STS.

--Assistance in learning use of STS is imperative for new users.

--The FCC must prevent inmates in jails from abusing STS.

--All these statements also apply to people who use STS on the computer.

--STS should be a national service.

-- Alternative speech assistant organizations should be encouraged because competition inspires improvements.

--Not all speech difficulties are equal. Different service providers could meet different specific needs.

--The operators deserve to be paid well enough to afford to offer excellent care and assistance.

Operators need good, appropriate and complete training.